

Model of Springfield Home
by GALT KERRY

DRAWER 12

SPRINGFIELD HOME

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Illinois

Springfield Home

Model by Gary Kersey

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

By DOUGLAS L. WILSON

Chautauqua: Old and New

Chautauqua. The name of a lake in western New York state, for many years before and after the turn of the century it was a word to conjure with in the national vocabulary. For millions of Americans it came to represent a beguiling combination of summertime pleasures and cultural activity. The Chautauqua's broad appeal was downright remarkable, for while ordinary Americans 100 years ago may have been interested in the acquisition of culture, more often than not they regarded it as the moral equivalent of taking castor oil — not especially pleasant, but good for you. The magic of the Chautauqua was in the way it helped the medicine go down.

The distinctive format of the Chautauqua movement drew its inspiration from two popular 19th century institutions, the lecture lyceum and the religious camp meeting. Its appeal to the American popular imagination lay in the Chautauqua's special blend of entertainment and education, of socializing and seriousness, of leisure and self-improvement. Like the religious camp meeting, the Chautauqua was a family affair, held out of doors and in a natural, non-urban setting; like the lyceum, its greatest attractions were lecturers of every persuasion, all presenting serious matter in a palatable and often entertaining form. Within a very few years of its inception in the 1870s, the experiment at Lake Chautauqua was being repeated nationwide, and circuits were formed for the orderly scheduling and sharing of talent. One of the most successful of all turn-of-the-century Chautauquas was located in the heart of the Illinois Lincoln country near Petersburg and was known as the Old Salem Chautauqua.

Named for its proximity to the village where Abraham Lincoln lived from 1831 to 1837, the Old Salem Chautauqua on the banks of the Sangamon River drew heavily from central Illinois, but it was sufficiently well-run and enticingly located to become a prime summertime family attraction for the entire Midwest. According to its historians, Katherine Miller and Raymond Montgomery (*A Chautauqua To Remember: The Story of Old Salem*, 1987), the Old Salem Chautauqua in its prime was "thought to be the largest Chautauqua West of the Allegheny Mountains." All the great Chau-



Photo courtesy of The Great American People Show

The Great American People Show players present their 1990 production of "Your Obedient Servant, A. Lincoln" at New Salem State Park in Petersburg.

tauqua figures appeared on the stage of the auditorium at Old Salem — from William Randolph Hearst and Booker T. Washington to the most acclaimed speaker of his day, William Jennings Bryan, who had graduated from nearby Illinois College in Jacksonville. Along with Bible lessons and classes in all manner of subjects, there was a constant procession of talented

Illinois Issues Summer Book Section

preachers, teachers, professors and scientists purveying information on every imaginable topic. In addition, the campers and cottagers who gathered by the thousands were regularly treated to the kind of entertaining cultural fare that was in short supply in the towns and cities of the region, such as classical music, opera and Shakespearean plays. Chautauqua came to be a greatly anticipated feature of family life, for the atmosphere of the campground was festive and inviting, and opportunities abounded for socializing and fun.

The Chautauqua movement eventually yielded to competition from the movies and the radio, as well as to the greatly enhanced mobility afforded the family of ordinary means by the automobile. The Old Salem Chautauqua lasted longer than most, finally meeting its demise in 1942 because of the privations of World War II. But the spirit of Chautauqua — the impulse to combine family summer outings with cultural activity — is still very much alive and in evidence in downstate Illinois.

A prime instance of thriving contemporary Chautauqua can be sampled only a few miles from the site of the Old Salem Chautauqua at Lincoln's New Salem State Park. Though the converging railroads that brought trainloads of visitors to Petersburg and old Salem no longer run, every summer tens of thousands of Americans make the pilgrimage by automobile to a reconstruction of historic New Salem, the obscure and short-lived log village that was the proving ground of Abraham Lincoln's early life. Arriving here at the age of 22, Lincoln struggled to make a living by an assortment of jobs and to repair the deficiencies in his education. Simply to tour the re-



Photo by Peter Guither

The 1990 Illinois Shakespeare Festival performers present Richard Sheridan's "The Rivals" on the grounds of Ewing Manor in Bloomington.

stored village is itself a lesson in American history, presenting, as it does, in dramatic and visual terms the physical conditions of pioneer life. Incorporating an excellent modern campground, Lincoln's new Salem State Park has proved a popular attraction for families in search of an engaging outdoor experience for more than a half century.

But for the last 15 years, New Salem has offered its summer visitors an added attraction in the way of entertainment and cultural enrichment that is strongly reminiscent of the old-time Chautauqua. Described in a park brochure as "a summer stock theatrical troupe featuring live, historically based performances," The Great American People Show (GAPS) performs nightly except on Mondays, from a stage in Kelso Hollow, a natural amphitheater that adjoins the reconstructed village. Its principal production, "Your Obedient Servant, A. Lincoln," was written expressly for this setting by a professor of theater at the University of Illinois, John Ahart, and is performed by a company of actors under his direction. The show aims at bringing Abraham Lincoln and his world to life, not so much by means of realistic sets and costumes as by spirited acting and dedication to an educational and inspirational purpose. GAPS has been consistently popular with New Salem visitors and regional audiences, and the success of its educational mission has been well recognized. It regularly receives support from the Illinois State Humanities Council, and in a speech honoring the work of such councils, GAPS was singled out by U.S. Sen. Paul Simon as a "paradigmatic project" that not only teaches by entertaining but inspires its audiences to learn.

Less than 100 miles away from New Salem at Bloomington is another prime example of the new Chautauqua. This attractive central Illinois town was on the judicial circuit that Abraham Lincoln followed while prac-



Great American People Show
at New Salem State Park in Petersburg
June 22-August 24
Curtain at 8 p.m. except Monday
Individual tickets \$8, seniors/students \$6.50;
group rates arranged by phone (217) 632-7755



Illinois Shakespeare Festival
at Ewing manor in Bloomington
• "Othello" on July 3, 7, 10, 13, 18, 21, 27 and 30; August 2
• "The Taming of the Shrew" on July 2, 5, 11, 14, 17, 19, 23, 25, 28 and 31; August 3
• "Antony and Cleopatra" on July 6, 9, 12, 16, 20, 24 and 26; August 1 and 4
Curtain at 8 p.m. except Monday
Individual tickets from \$8-\$15, season tickets \$19-\$34
Box office telephone: (309) 438-2535



Photo courtesy of The World Affairs Forum at Mount Vernon

At the 1989 World Affairs Forum in Mount Vernon, from left: Despo Pavledes, 1989 World Affairs Forum chairman for Greece; Hank Hannah, activities chairman for Nigeria; and Hamzat Ahmadu, ambassador from Nigeria.

ticing law. His fellow lawyers remembered that one of Lincoln's favorite diversions on the circuit was reading Shakespeare, whose work he nearly always carried with him. That familiarity with Shakespeare was, for Lincoln, no mere cultural affectation, and it became evident in the way he turned to Shakespeare's tragedies in the darkest hours of the Civil War. Lincoln's affinity for Shakespeare has been mirrored in our own time by the rising popularity of Shakespearian theater, and for more than a dozen summers Bloomington has hosted the lively and successful Illinois Shakespeare Festival.

Like the Great American People Show, the Illinois Shakespeare Festival was founded by a professor of theater, Cal Pritner of Illinois State University in Bloomington, who served as its artistic director until his retirement in 1990. And like GAPS, it has been fostered and carried forward not simply as a seasonal activity but as something of a cause, both educational and artistic. Summer Shakespeare festivals, though not common, are by no means novel, and the Bloomington festival has had viable models to follow. But its great and ever-present challenge is the one faced by the Chautauqua movement, namely, finding a way to bring the bard to a popular and diverse audience.

The first element in the original Chautauqua equation was an attractive and congenial setting, and this appears to be a key to the success of the Illinois Shakespeare Festival. First recognized by Pritner as an ideal location for an outdoor artistic enterprise, the setting for the festival is the beautifully landscaped grounds of Ewing Manor, the imposing Tudor-style "seat" of a local philanthropic family. The chance to explore these interesting grounds and to picnic on the lawn before the show has definitely been part of the allure for the audiences since the festival's inception in 1978. The festival takes care to reinforce and enrich its productions with such extras as

costumed madrigal singers, lectures on the plays prior to performance and related exhibits in the Ewing Manor museum.

A final example of contemporary Chautauqua in downstate Illinois is to be found at Mount Vernon, which hosts a unique and astonishingly ambitious World Affairs Forum each autumn. A persistent idea of the original Chautauqua movement was to increase the ordinary American's familiarity with other countries and cultures, and the people of Mount Vernon have taken up precisely this task on a communitywide basis. Begun in 1981 in connection with the honoring of a Mount Vernon native, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, the United States representative to the U.N. from 1981 to 1985, the World Affairs Forum focuses on a different country every year: for example, Australia in 1988, Greece in 1989 and Nigeria in 1990. Its aim is to promote activities that will help familiarize the townspeople and visitors with various aspects of the focal country and to involve as much of the community as possible, from service clubs and local schools to senior citizens' centers. For six weeks in early fall this year, Mount Vernon will become the site of almost daily lectures, concerts and other programs designed to promote greater understanding of the peoples and cultures of Brazil.

*. . . the spirit of Chautauqua
— the impulse to combine
family summer outings with
cultural activity . . .*

The original Chautauqua functioned by drawing large numbers of people to a common outdoor site, but its modern counterpart is conspicuously decentralized and may appear almost anywhere. Downstate Illinois is, in fact, rich in Chautauqua-type attractions which offer opportunities for families to mix travel, outdoor activities and cultural discovery. Besides New Salem, Bloomington and Mount Vernon, there is the restored Mormon city at Nauvoo, where the prophet Joseph Smith resided in the 1840s; or Bishop Hill, the site of the utopian experiment a few years later led by the Swedish charismatic, Erik Jansson; or the recently established Heritage America Festival at Cahokia, featuring arts, crafts and activities of the Mississippian and other Native American cultures (scheduled for September 27-29 in 1991). The list is surprisingly long and still growing. Here in the land of Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson's cherished ideal of an enlightened citizenry annually reasserts itself and finds new expression in an old form — Chautauqua. □

Douglas L. Wilson, professor of English at Knox College, received his B.A. at Doane College and his Ph.D. at the University of Pennsylvania. Director of the Seymour Library at Knox College since 1972, he recently published an essay on Jefferson and Lincoln in Atlantic Monthly and delivered a paper at the 1991 Lincoln Symposium in Springfield.

An extensively studied intrusive site, Aztalan in southeastern Wisconsin, is the focus of an article by Lynne G. Goldstein and John D. Richards, who propose visualizing sites as discrete and regional rather than as variant examples of the central culture. This technique allows archaeologists to pursue a site's individual characteristics rather than viewing it as part of a whole; such a tight focus gleans data valuable for eventually connecting the distant site to the center. Goldstein and Richards explain why Aztalan is located on the Crawfish River on the basis of their analysis of the ecosystem, but admit their inability to provide evidence of the part played by Aztalan within the greater Mississippian system.

On the other side of the intrusion/diffusion dichotomy, Charles R. Moffat presents data which support the emergence of typical Mississippian culture from the concordant growth of several centers rather than one. The regionalized Mississippians of the Lower Wabash Valley "exerted strong influence over much of eastern Illinois and may have limited Cahokia's influence in this direction." Moffat's findings indicate that Mississippian culture was caused by diffusion outward from regional centers rather than intrusion into outlying areas from the main Cahokia site.

The excellent graphics in the book, including regional and site maps, photographs of artifacts and drawings which compare pottery types, allow the reader to trace changes which occurred as the Mississippian culture evolved. Comparison sketches of pottery rims, for instance, provide vivid, concrete examples of differences in style over time and space which would not otherwise be apparent to the lay reader. Maps place archaeological sites within regional and ecological contexts.

Readers interested in the archaeology of the Midwest will enjoy *Cahokia and the Hinterlands*. The comparison of center and edge sharpens the focus of our understanding of Mississippian culture, but also clarifies the need for more research into the still-mysterious ways of the Mississippian people we know only by the mounds and artifacts they left behind. □

Kathleen King, associate professor of English at Idaho State University, is the author of *Cricket Sings*, a 1983 novel about the Cahokian culture published by Ohio University Press and available in paperback since 1987.

Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858

By MARK NEELY JR.

David Zarefsky. *Lincoln, Douglas, and Slavery: In the Crucible of Public Debate*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990. Pp. 309 with preface, endnotes and index. \$34.95 (cloth).

The Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858 form part of American political folklore, reminding us how far the Republicans and Democrats of today have departed from the golden age. Illinois voters in that late summer and early autumn were treated to homespun humor and moving eloquence along with a thorough discussion of important issues. Imagine how pleasant it would be to return to a time when a candidate for public office might ridicule his opponent's argument, as Lincoln did Douglas's in the Ottawa debate, by describing it as "a specious and fantastic arrangement of words, by which a man can prove a horse chestnut to be a chestnut horse." By contrast, today's politicians often borrow their shopworn "one-liners" from television advertisements, the only predictably common currency of modern American conversational exchange.

But golden ages, upon close historical examination, turn out to be fool's gold. One should always ask, "Golden for whom?" Abraham Lincoln employed his famous chestnut about the "horse chestnut" to dismiss "anything that argues me into [Douglas's] idea of perfect social and political equality with the negro." The era of the debates constituted, in fact, the low point in American history for black resi-

dents of this country, as Lincoln himself suggested in a rarely quoted speech, delivered about a year before the debates, denouncing the *Dred Scott* decision: "... the Chief Justice ... plainly assumes, as a fact, that the public estimate of the black man is more favorable now than it was in the days of the Revolution. This assumption is a mistake. In some trifling particulars, the condition of that race has been ameliorated; but, as a whole, in this country, the change between then and now is decidedly the other way; and their ultimate destiny has never appeared so hopeless as in the last three or four years. In two of the five states — New Jersey and North Carolina — that then gave the free negro the right of voting, the right has since been taken away; and in a third — New York — it has been greatly abridged; while it has not been extended ... to a single additional State, though the number of the States has more than doubled."

In his remarks Lincoln continued in that vein for quite some time. Yet as concerned as Lincoln was by the plight of black Americans, even he wanted nothing to do with advanced notions of racial equality. It was no golden age for some.

Heretofore, students of rhetoric have been more tempted than others to think of the debates as representing a high standard from which American culture has declined. Focusing merely on the manipulation of language to suit an audience makes it easy to overlook sobering historical facts: for example, that the Lincoln-Douglas debates preceded the worst political catastrophe in American history, the Civil War. The debates obviously had little utility in averting that disaster, and the doctrines expressed in them cannot be directly linked to the most worthwhile outcome of that war, the emancipation of some 3.5 million slaves. Seeking the roots of the Emancipation Proclamation in the speeches Lincoln delivered in 1858 has so foiled his defenders that they have often opted, instead, to compliment him for his rapid "growth" in statesmanship as president, years after the debates were over.

David Zarefsky, dean of the School of Speech at Northwestern University, approaches the Lincoln-Douglas debates from the academic discipline of communication studies, but he holds few simplistic illusions about the Illinois campaign for the U.S. Senate in 1858. Revealing an aware-

ness of the mean-spirited racial assumptions and the small-minded partisan imperatives of that age, he proves himself capable of careful analysis, largely unencumbered by nostalgia. He generally avoids a narrow focus on language and style of argument and steadily reminds a reader of the broad historical context of the remarks made by Lincoln and Douglas.

Zarefsky identifies four types of arguments used in the debates: moral, historical, legal and conspiratorial. Sorting them into such categories might well help us remember the various points made in these 21 hours of political oratory, which — when printed in 1860 — filled a substantial volume with small print. A chapter of Zarefsky's book is devoted to each type of argument, and the content of the debates is fully surveyed. Two early chapters set the historical stage, another chapter describes the results and aftermath of the campaign, and a final chapter draws conclusions.

Zarefsky maintains that the conflict over moral issues could not be resolved, but that the candidates employed the other types of arguments as surrogates for the moral ones and thus sustained a genuine political discourse. This seems unconvincing, however, as the candidates could hardly have done so consciously while scrambling for political advantage. They did not pride themselves on having found a way to explore the issues despite their moral disagreements. After Lincoln lost the election, he boasted that he had made "some marks which will tell for the cause of civil liberty long after I'm gone." For his part Douglas crowed in a private letter that Illinois had proved itself "faithful to the Democracy against the assaults and treasonable purposes of the Abolitionists and their allies." It is not clear that Lincoln, Douglas or the American people learned much from the debates, and Zarefsky's book does not explain such an outcome.

Perhaps a trace of nostalgia remains in Zarefsky's work after all. Whatever the case, it is difficult to grasp the overall point of his analysis. In fact, after reading the book, one is tempted to borrow a line from recent political debates and ask, "Where's the beef?" □

Mark Neely Jr., director of the Lincoln Museum in Fort Wayne, Ind., is the author of numerous studies on Lincoln.

Dreiser's life: the rest of the story

By FREDERICK C. STERN

Richard Lingeman. *Theodore Dreiser: An American Journey, 1908-1945. Vol. II. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1990. Pp. 544 with notes, bibliography, index and photographs. \$39.95 (cloth).*

I am not sure what makes a great biography. Perhaps, first of all, a subject who has played a role in our history, so that her or his story reveals not only that subject, but ourselves as we were and are. If that is the case, Richard Lingeman has proven, in the second volume of his biography of Theodore Dreiser as he did in the first (*Theodore Dreiser: At the Gates of the City, 1871-1907*, published in 1986), that he has such a subject. Has he written a great biography of that subject? It is, of course, too soon to tell. As with most writing, time must pass before we can make so weighty a judgment. We may never be able to make definitive assessments about biographies because it would appear that significant subjects require new biographies for every epoch. However, I think Lingeman has written the Dreiser biography for our time.

There have been several important biographies of Dreiser — Lingeman handily acknowledges them in the first volume of his own work. The most important, in my view, is Robert H. Elias's *Theodore Dreiser: Apostle of Nature* (1948), though I do not at all want to denigrate W.A. Swanberg's *Dreiser* (1965), or Dorothy Dudley's pioneering *Dreiser and the Land of the Free* (1946). But none of these works — even Elias's, which I admire — is as full, or as appropriate for our mo-

ment, as Lingeman's study.

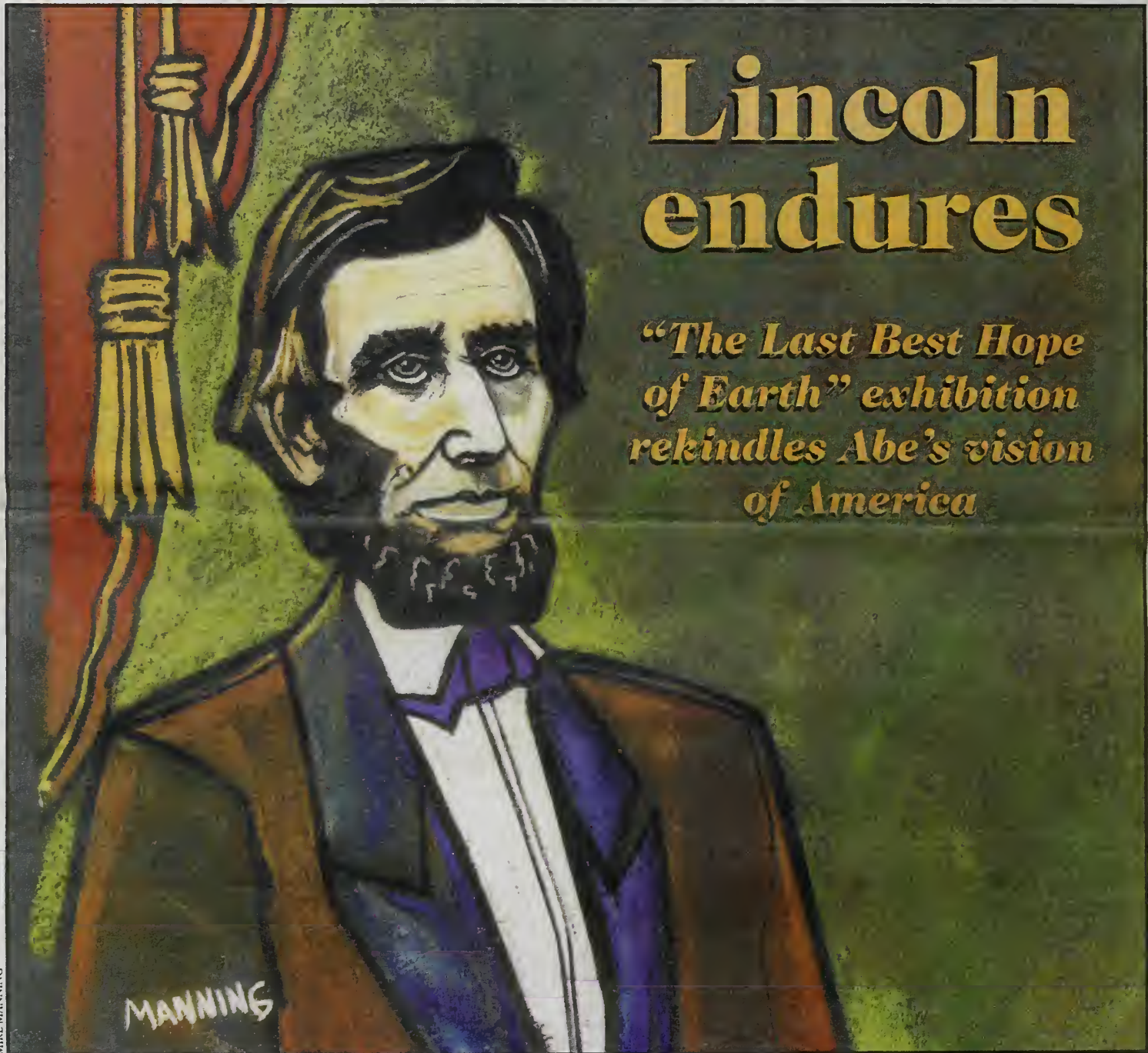
In his earlier volume, Lingeman brought us up to the time when Dreiser was flush with *Sister Carrie*'s "successful second debut" in 1907, editing the "ladies" magazine *The Delineator* for the Butterick pattern company, making money and at peace with his first wife "Jug" (to the degree that he ever was). The second volume begins when Dreiser's successful editorial career is coming to its end, and his struggle to write and publish *Jennie Gerhardt* (1910) begins. Dreiser has returned to his true vocation as novelist and essayist and will never leave it again. The biography takes us through the agonized engendering and eventual production of such later major works as *The Financier* (1912) and *The "Genius"* (1923). We see a man often desperate for money and increasingly desperate in his unhappy marriage. Involved with many women, Dreiser was apparently never certain of his own sexual magnetism or even potency. We meet his many friends, most important of them perhaps H.L. Mencken, his first champion and often his best critic. Moreover, Dreiser — like Mencken — is under constant attack from what he calls "the puritans," like the distinguished critic Stuart Pratt Sherman. It proves to be a hard time for the man some were already calling "America's greatest novelist."

Though the volume is not divided exactly this way, there is a break and a change in direction when Dreiser meets and falls in love with the woman with whom he was to spend the rest of his life — though by no means in monogamous bliss — Helen Patges Richardson. He and Helen moved to Hollywood where he hoped to earn money from films, a project that had limited success. Perhaps more important for literary history, he gave up temporarily on *The Bulwark*, which had been troubling him for some years. Soon he turned to the work that was to assure him not only another critical success but also success as a best-selling writer: *An American Tragedy* (1925).

The rest of the story is equally fascinating. Lingeman deals with the writing not only of the novels but also of such other forms as *A Hoosier Holiday* (1916) — Dreiser's nostalgic but critical trip to the home of his childhood; his only well-wrought play, *The Hand of the Potter* (1918); and such later works as the phil-

Illinois Times

SPRINGFIELD'S INDEPENDENT WEEKLY ♦ THURSDAY, MARCH 7, 1996 ♦ VOL. 21, NO. 29



Lincoln endures

"The Last Best Hope of Earth" exhibition rekindles Abe's vision of America

MANNING

INFINITE JESTER: *Bloomington author pens hot new novel* (PAGE 18)

LOST INNOCENCE: *Attorney general wants more juveniles tried as adults* (PAGE 3)

HUSTLIN' HUSKIE: *NIU president's paycheck does alumni proud* (PAGE 14)

LAST BEST HOPE OF EARTH

Lincoln's vision
of America comes to life
in a comprehensive new exhibit



BY WILLIAM FURRY

Riding Amtrak from Springfield to Chicago one follows the Illinois route of Abraham Lincoln's funeral train in reverse, passing through the all-but-forgotten whistle stops of Selbytown, Shirley, Cayuga, Lexington, Elwood, and Hampton en route to the Windy City. North of Joliet the barren winter fields quickly give over to smoke-belching petroleum refineries, automobile graveyards, and unreclaimed strip

mines that 130 years ago were unspoiled prairie. As the train rolls closer to the city, burned-out factories and graffiti-covered warehouses

encroach on pinched neighborhood playgrounds where children shoot hoops and occasionally each

other for a piece of the American Dream.

That Dream could use a transfusion, and who better to pump up the vision than the quintessential American himself, A. Lincoln, whom historians have resurrected for a marvelous exhibit now at the Chicago Historical Society (CHS), located at Clark and North streets near Lincoln Park.

Earlier this month the *Chicago Tribune* predicted *The Last Best Hope of Earth: Abraham Lincoln and the Promise of America* would be this year's Monet exhibit, which brought record crowds to the Art Institute in 1995. Indeed, attendance has quadrupled at the CHS since the exhibit opened on February 12. In anticipation of record crowds the Society took the unprecedented step of arranging advance ticket sales for the exhibit through Ticketmaster, which has both

Four scores and seven years ago our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived, can

Viagra Gene Dinkelspiel

I have just read your article about some bridges and fatigues here - Will you please me for asking what the hours of your army here show since the battle of Antietam the fatigues anything?

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10 ►

Last best hope for what?



Historian Eric Foner lectures on emancipation and the legacy of slavery on April 23.



Pulitzer Prize-winning author Garry Wills discusses Lincoln as a war leader on March 26.



Phillip Shaw Paludan talks about Lincoln and the political conversation on April 9.



Illinois State Historian Thomas Schwartz talks about the Lincoln legacy on May 7.

In conjunction with *The Last Best Hope of Earth: Abraham Lincoln and the Promise of America* exhibit, the Chicago Historical Society has scheduled a Lincoln lecture series featuring several prominent historians. The series, titled "Last Best Hope For What?", is free with CHS admission and open to the public, and will be held every other Tuesday at 6 p.m. beginning March 12. The programs will be held in the Arthur Rubloff Auditorium. The schedule is as follows:

•Tuesday, March 12: "The Last Best Hope for What? Lincoln's Vision of America." Mark E. Neely, Jr., author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Abraham Lincoln and Civil Liberties* and *The Abraham Lincoln Encyclopedia*, explains Lincoln's idea of democracy.

•Tuesday, March 26: "War for the Union: Portrait of a Leader." Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Garry Wills (*Lincoln at Gettysburg* and *The Second Civil War*) assesses Lincoln as a war president.

•Tuesday, April 9: "Lincoln and the Political Conversation." Phillip Shaw Paludan, author of *The Presidency of Abraham Lincoln*, examines Lincoln's rise to power, his political power and rhetoric, and his impact on modern political discussion.

•Tuesday, April 23: "Emancipation: Black Freedom and the Legacy of Slavery." Eric Foner, DeWitt Clinton Professor of History at Columbia University, author of *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party*, and co-curator of the CHS exhibition *A House Divided: America in the Age of Lincoln*, discusses Lincoln and his role in emancipation.

Tuesday, May 7: "Open Forum: The Lincoln Legacy in Our Time." Thomas Schwartz, Illinois State Historian and curator of the Henry Horner Lincoln Collection, invites audience questions and participation in the concluding lecture of the series.

Lecture attendees are invited to meet and visit with guest scholars in "After Thoughts," an informal reception over wine and hors d'oeuvres in the Big Shoulders Café on the first floor of the CHS. Each reception is \$12 (\$45 for the entire series) and reservations must be made in advance. For more information call 312-642-4600, ext. 389.

While visiting *The Last Best Hope of Earth: Abraham Lincoln and the Promise of America*, take time to tour the Chicago Historical Society's permanent Lincoln collection, *A House Divided: America in the Age of Lincoln*. *A House Divided* showcases the Society's extensive Civil War collection, which includes more than 600 period artifacts, among them a coach used by the Lincoln family in Washington, D.C., and the bed Lincoln died in.

The exhibit focuses on nineteenth-century expansion and the fierce sectionalism that divided the nation over the question of the expansion of slavery in the western territories. To bring the era to life the exhibit features a video, five audio tapes, and recorded period music.

Admission to a *House Divided: America in the Age of Lincoln* is free with paid admission to the Chicago Historical Society.

—William Furry

a local access number and a walk-in office at Bergner's in White Oaks Mall.

The title for the exhibition comes from Lincoln's second Annual Message to Congress, delivered on December 1, 1862, one month prior to the signing of his Emancipation Proclamation. In that address Lincoln asked Congress to support his proclamation, reminding lawmakers that none of them could escape history. "The fiery trial through which we pass, will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation," he said.

For Lincoln, there was no true democracy in America without freedom for all; the secession of the southern states from the Union and the firing on Fort Sumter were provocations for the Civil War, but slavery was the underlying cause. And although Lincoln personally believed the existence of slavery in the South made a mockery of the Declaration of Independence, as president he was sworn to uphold the Constitution, which made no provision for the extinction of that "peculiar institution." Lincoln's election created

an especially volatile situation, one that was immediately exacerbated by secession and armed rebellion.

A year and a half into the rebellion, Lincoln, knowing full well the rest of the world looked to this nation's experimental form of government as the litmus test for democracy, issued this challenge to his countrymen: "We know how to save the Union.... In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free—honorable alike in what we give and what we preserve. We shall nobly save, or meanly

lose, the last best hope of earth."

In this singular and most-compelling exhibit, the life, career, and death of Lincoln is presented through more than two-hundred artifacts—personal letters, official documents, family effects, and historic photographs. The exhibit, a one-time gathering of three major Lincoln collections—the Huntington Library in California, the Illinois State Historical Library in Springfield, and the private collection of Louise and Barry Taper of Kentucky—is so comprehensive it takes



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two sizable galleries to display it all.

That any of this material exists at all is miraculous; that all of it is on display in the same gallery at the same time is only slightly less so. The Chicago version of *Last Best Hope of Earth*, an expansion of an exhibition which opened at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, in October 1993, is by most accounts the "largest and most comprehensive collection of original Lincoln materials ever." As originally conceived, the exhibit, which took three years to plan, was to have closed permanently in August 1994. Through negotiations with the collection holders and the Chicago Historical Society, of which Lincoln was an honorary charter member, a second exhibition was authorized.

It will probably be the last for a while. Neither the Huntington Library nor the Tapers have plans to loan their Lincoln artifacts out again for some time.

Funding for the CHS exhibit was provided by Bank of America, Ameritech, Northern Trust Bank, Union Pacific Foundation, Aon Corporation, Caterpillar, Inc., Crate and Barrel, the Illinois Humanities Council, and Rand McNally, among others.

Last Best Hope of Earth is divided into eight sections, each illuminating a different stage of evolution in Lincoln's life. Central to the exhibit is Lincoln's rise from unknown prairie lawyer and legislator to commander and chief of the nation during the country's worst domestic crisis. There's Lincoln as frontiersman; Lincoln as prairie lawyer and emerging politician; Lincoln as able campaigner, debater, and darkhorse presidential candidate; Lincoln as first-term president and emerging statesman; Lincoln as a war president; Lincoln as husband and father; Lincoln as emancipator and defender of the Union; and Lincoln as the nation's first murdered president.

From Lincoln's teen-age years in Indiana is a signed page from a school exercise book that includes four lines of Lincoln doggerel in his meticulous script:

*Abraham Lincoln is my nam(e)
And with my pen I wrote the sonie
I wrote in both hast and speed
and left it here for fools to read.*

It's a far cry from Gettysburg, but it shows that in 1824 Lincoln already had a sense of what his signature might be worth to future generations.

THE LAST BEST HOPE OF EARTH: ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND THE PROMISE OF AMERICA



The *Last Best Hope of Earth* features more than 200 original artifacts from three major Lincoln collections: The Huntington Library in California, the Illinois State Historical Library in Springfield, and the private Lincoln collection of Louis and Barry Taper.

Other rarities from Lincoln's early years include a signed promissory note to Reuben Radford, a merchant who in 1833 fled New Salem and the Clary Grove Boys but not before selling Lincoln his stock and interest in a grocery store that eventu-

ally "winked out"; an honorable discharge from the 1832 Black Hawk War for David M. Panties, signed by "A. Lincoln, Capt."; as well as a carefully drafted and signed layout of Huron, Illinois, one of six towns Lincoln surveyed between 1834 and 1837.

Although surveyed, Huron never existed off paper. The exhibit also includes Abe and Mary Todd's wedding license from November 4, 1842, and the door plate and front-door key to their home in Springfield.

As Lincoln ages chronologically in the exhibit, the number, quality, and significance of the documents increases accordingly.

There's a bound congressional copy of Lincoln's 1848 "bloody spot" speech whereby the green Whig Congressman from Illinois challenged President James K. Polk to identify the precise location on U.S. soil where American blood was first spilled in the Mexican War. The speech angered war Democrats and Whigs and earned Lincoln the nickname "Spotty," which plagued him in later years. There are Lincoln's own thoughts and words about slavery, including his notes attacking the pro-slavery theology of Alabama minister Frederic A. Ross, who, in his 1857 book *Slavery: Ordained by God*, tried to prove God wanted whites to enslave blacks.

Anyone who subscribes to the theory that Lincoln was a racist who emancipated slaves only out of political expediency should look closely at Lincoln's pre-presidential speeches and letters. Certainly Lincoln played politics where he had to, but there was justice in his soul. In 1909, Leo Tolstoy, who himself had reached a sort of sainthood in his native Russia, called Lincoln "a humanitarian as broad as the world. He was bigger than his country—bigger than all the Presidents together. Why? Because he loved his enemies as himself."

Reading Lincoln's eloquent prose in his own well-measured script is like reading holy writ; certainly there is something of the Biblical patriarch in his writings. Shakespeare too, especially in the Second Inaugural Address, where Lincoln fuses King James and The Bard in these impassioned lines:

Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet if God wills that it continues until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two-hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said: "The judg-

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE ►

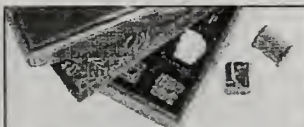
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Abraham Lincoln

ments of the Lord are true, and righteous
altogether."

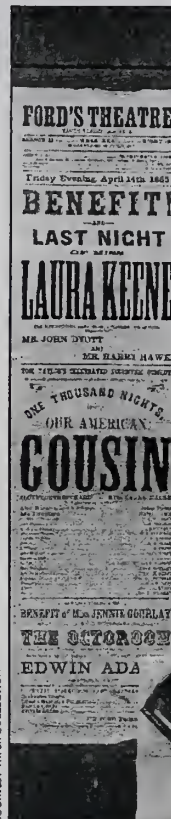
The Emancipation Proclamation and the Gettysburg Address are here of course, but so are Lincoln's terse handwritten notes pardoning army deserters as well as his sarcastic communiques with General George McClellan, the "Little Napoleon" who commanded but would not lead the Army of the Potomac into battle, yet later declared war on Lincoln in the 1864 presidential election. Here also are a few of Lincoln's tender epistles to Mary; a scrawled note to a White House blacksmith requesting shoes for Tad's pony; and Lincoln's private letters to friends and supporters defending his often-unpopular stands with radical abolitionists.

In one remarkable document, a September 1861 letter to Orville Browning marked "Private and Confidential" signed by Lincoln but written in the elegant flowing hand of his secretary John Nicolay, Lincoln chastizes Browning for voicing support for General John C. Fremont's premature and unauthorized emancipation decree in Missouri, a maneuver Lincoln considered purely political, unconstitutional, and dangerous as it could force border states such as Kentucky out of the Union. Abolitionists, Browning among them, rallied to Fremont's defense, but Lincoln, singleminded in his oath to preserve the Union, refused to jeopardize the border states just to win points with radical Republicans.

"I think to lose Kentucky is nearly the same as to lose the whole game," Lincoln wrote. "Kentucky gone, we cannot hold Missouri, nor, as I think, Maryland. These all against us, and the job on our hands is too large for us. We would as well consent to separation at once, including the surrender of the capital."

Up to now I've only mentioned the Lincoln documents, but *Last Best Hope* includes dozens of cultural artifacts too.

There's the mantel clock from Lincoln's and Herndon's Springfield law office, for instance, and the wooden inkwell and pen Abe used to draft his First Inaugural Address. There's a beaver-pelt stovepipe hat Lincoln wore in Washington and a porcelain chamber pot with the presidential seal trimmed in gold on the lid, a fitting throne for any chief executive. Some pieces of Mary Lincoln's jewelry are also on display, as well as samples of



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OUR THOUSAND NIGHTS
OUR AMERICAN
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IS STILL AT LARGE.
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Artifacts from the Lincoln assassination featured in *The Last Best Hope of Earth* include the gloves, handkerchief, and stick pin Lincoln wore to Ford's Theatre on April 14, 1865, as well as the playbill for *Our American Cousin* and a wanted poster for assassination conspirators John Wilkes Booth, John Surratt, and David Harold.

her White House china and silverware, an ivory-covered memorandum book, letter opener, a pair of gold-embroidered gloves, and one of her linen nightcaps.

Rarely seen artifacts from the Lincoln assassination are on display here too, including the gloves and handkerchief Lincoln wore to Ford's Theatre on April 14, 1865, an original playbill to the ill-fated performance of *Our American Cousin*, and a reward poster offering

\$100,000 for the capture of assassin John Wilkes Booth. A display not part of the original Huntington Exhibition but included in the CHS showing features items from the Lincoln funeral cortege, including the only known photograph of Lincoln lying in state.

Indeed, the exhibit, which takes at least ninety minutes to experience, includes so much history it's hard to believe anything could have been left out. Yet dozens of

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Eighth grade students from St. Thomas the Apostle School in Hyde Park gather around a display on slavery in America at the Chicago Historical Society's exhibition *The Last Best Hope of Earth: Abraham Lincoln and the Promise of America*.

documents were. Tom Schwartz, Illinois State Historian and curator of the state's Lincoln collection, told *Illinois Times* that when he and exhibit co-curator John H. Rhodehamel, curator of American History at Huntington Library, chose the collection that would be the core of *Last Best Hope of Earth*, they had a list of letters, documents, and artifacts that had to be left behind. "The things that were omitted could easily have been the centerpiece for another Lincoln exhibit," Schwartz said. When it comes to Lincoln-related materials, Schwartz added, there is an "embarrassment of riches."

An obvious omission in this exhibition are documents from the Lincoln Legal Papers Project, which at last count had uncovered more than 160 legal papers Lincoln had a hand in drafting. None of those documents has ever been exhibited to the public. The Library of Congress's collection of Lincoln papers, a sizable cache of presidential papers, notes and memos, and private letters, was likewise left out. And there was no room in the exhibit for secondary materials such as Mary Lincoln's personal letters, William Herndon's interviews with Lincoln's New Salem neighbors, and Lincoln secretaries John Nicolay's and John Hay's notes and

papers—all of which suggest the need for a permanent home and exhibition space to tell the Lincoln story.

It is disconcerting to note that Springfield, the city Lincoln called home for a quarter of a century, doesn't have a gallery large enough to mount a major exhibition such as *Last Best Hope*. Fort Wayne, Indiana, a community Lincoln never visited but home to the Lincoln Life Insurance Company, recently built The Lincoln Museum, a 30,000-square-foot museum/library/cultural center with private funds. The museum, which includes eleven galleries and four theaters, owns more than 200 signed Lincoln documents, 18,000 books, and thousands of original photographs and manuscripts.

Springfield lost its bid for a Lincoln Interpretive Center after the Republican Congress shot down Congressman Dick Durbin's and the National Park Service's proposal for a \$17 million facility. The proposed Center, which would have interpreted Lincoln's life and contribution to American history *in toto* as well as provided exhibit space for other public and private collections, was resurrected earlier this month when House Speaker Lee Daniels made his pitch for a Lincoln Center.

"It's a shame that after the [*Last Best Hope*] exhibit closes many of the items will be locked from the public's view," Daniels said in recent a press release. "We owe it not only to the people of Illinois, but to people across the world who look to these documents and Lincoln's life for inspiration."

Daniels says his proposed Lincoln Center would be built with mostly private, not public, funds, which ought to placate critics who found too much pork in Durbin's proposal.

But chances are the fervor for a Lincoln Interpretive Center in Springfield will die as soon as *The Last Best Hope of Earth* closes next February. That means your best hope of viewing the most comprehensive exhibit of Lincoln artifacts this century lies in Chicago, a dozen whistle stops up the track. ■

The *Last Best Hope of Earth* is open from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekdays; 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Saturday; and noon to 5 p.m. on Sunday. The general admission and exhibition fee is \$7 for adults and \$3 for children. CHS members are admitted free. The CHS is located at the corner of North Avenue and Clark Street. CTA buses 11, 22, 36, 72, 151, and 156 stop nearby. For additional information, call 312-642-4600.

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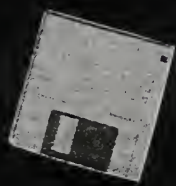
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News-Journal photos/Kathleen Fahrer

The eyes of craftsman Charles Lakatos peer through the window of his latest work, a replica of Abraham Lincoln's home

Replica of Lincoln's home built to scale

By JEFF HIBBS
City Editor

Love of history and passion for craft have created a miracle in Charles Lakatos' garage.

Lakatos, a retired carpenter, completed work Sunday on a scale replica of Abraham Lincoln's 12-room Springfield, Ill., home. Lakatos said the project started last summer when he was contacted by local historian and Lincoln expert Gary Kersey.

"I told Gary, 'I'll build it, you finish it,' meaning sofas, chairs and tables," Lakatos said Tuesday.

Lakatos' replica stands 37 inches tall, on a base 43 1/2 inches by 50 1/2 inches. Wood floors, baseboards, winding stairways and five fireplaces are meticulously placed beneath a roof made of handmade wood shake shingles.

"There's 2,800 of them up there," Lakatos said. "I glued each one on by hand. There's 19 doors, 26 windows and the front wall and the three walls in the back come off, to allow you to see inside."

Kersey said he delivered a set of plans to the home to Lakatos in August, but didn't get his first look at the

Lincoln replica until this week.

"I stayed away," Kersey said from his local real estate office. "We started this project and I said, 'Now it's in your hands.' Everyone spoke so well of him and said, 'He'll do a great job.'"

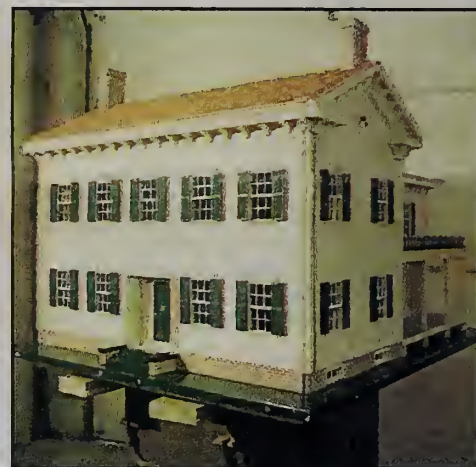
"He'd come in here and ask questions, and I think he got caught up in it once he realized what he had."

Kersey said the replica home will be made available to the Clinton County Historical Society, but it will also accompany him during his annual pilgrimage to the Civil War battlefields of Pennsylvania.

"I intend to take it to Gettysburg College this summer," Kersey said. "The course of study at the Civil War Institute this year is Lincoln. I'm sure it will be prominently displayed out there."

The attention to detail, Kersey said, makes Lakatos' work a "one-of-a-kind" tribute to the only home Lincoln ever owned.

"There's a picture right after he was elected president, and there's a lot of people on the front steps, and they're all about the house," Kersey said. "It was just like I'm



In three months, Charles Lakatos transformed plywood and poplar into a stunning replica of Abraham Lincoln's home in Springfield, Ill. The home, produced for local Lincoln expert Gary Kersey, will appear in venues from the Clinton County Historical Society to the Civil War Institute in Gettysburg, Pa.

looking at that and I could almost see that picture.

"The color and the detail are so tremendous. I was just really proud that I turned this over and let somebody do this."



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by GARY KESSEY

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